

Present Scenario of Ecotourism in North East India

By

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1. Abstract:

Abstract North Eastern India is well blessed naturally and its rich ethnical heritage North. Ecotourism is a growing area in this tourist friendly region. It is a responsible tour to the natural areas, which cover the ecology and promote the welfare of the people. It is sound environment tourism. It focuses to the destination where flora and fauna, cultural and other historical heritage etc. exist. If ecotourism is not properly monitored it can be as damaging as mass tourism. The paper highlights the challenges and opportunities of ecotourism in North Eastern India.

Keywords: North Eastern India, Ecotourism, Welfare, Environment, People

2. Introduction: -

The North Eastern India is endowed with numerous beautiful hill ranges covered with forests, coupled with the rich natural and cultural heritage provide unique opportunities for Ecotourism (A. Medhi). The landscape constituents of the region via hills (60%), plateau (12%) together with the river system contributes substantially in enriching the scenic component. This area is a part of Indo-Burma Hotspot with 66.07 % of forest covered area (SFR 2015) that supports various species of mammals, birds, reptiles, more than 2500 species of plants and quite 300 species of medical plants.

Ecotourism or Ecologically Sustainable Tourism may be a kind of tourism involving visiting fragile, pristine and comparatively undistributed natural areas, intended as a coffee impact and offer small scale alternative to straightforward commercial mass tourism. It offers occasion to showcase countries' unique natural and associated artistic heritage to callers while enhancing the livelihood options for the original peoples. Ecotourism is encyclopedically linked as a means of achieving binary pretensions of Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development.

Ecotourism focuses on local cultures and wildness adventures and environmental protection. Moreover, it can generate employment opportunities, particularly in underdeveloped areas. It also ensures proper utilization of natural resources like landscape, mountains, biodiversity area, rivers etc. for the benefit of the local people. Ecotourism is that the best thanks to enjoy the nature's charisma.

3. Tourism vs Ecotourism**The key difference between tourism and ecotourism lies with the involvement of nature; tourism is much concerned about the wellbeing of the local people and conservation of nature, ecotourism tries to form a minimal impact on the people and on the environment.

4. Main Focus of Ecotourism: -

- Ecotourism focuses on local culture, wildness adventures and cultural heritage.
- Personal growth and leaving new ways to live on our vulnerable planet.
- On cultural artifacts from the society.
- Travel to destination where Flora, Fauna and ethnic heritage are the primary attraction.
- Minimize the adverse effects of traditional tourism on natural environment and cultural integrity of local people.

- Evaluating cultural and environmental elements initiatives by hospitality providers to promote energy efficiency, water reuse, recycle and the creation of economic opportunities for local individuals.

**** In most of the time it is used as a substitute of Tourism.**

5.Study Area:

The study area of the paper is Ecotourism in North-East India. The area comprises eight states via Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Sikkim. The region covers an area of 2.5 lakhs sq. km out of which 4567 km is bounded by transnational border. The region has 4.85 cores population as per the census of 2011.

6.Methodology and Data Base

To cope with the objectives of the study an evaluative and descriptive method has been adopted for the study. The present paper is based on secondary data only and was collected from various books, journals, magazines report and publication, internet etc.

7.Objectives of the Study:

The basic objectives of the present paper are:

1. To explore various Eco tourist destination of the NE India.
2. To assess the eventuality of ecotourism in NE India.
3. To disinter the problems of ecotourism in the region.
4. To explore the pattern of foreign tourist arrival and domestic tourist arrival within the region.

8.Usefulness of the Study:

The study would be useful to all stake holders in tourism. It's useful in understanding the problems and prospects of ecotourism in NE India and thereby helps to promote sustainable development by raising standard of living with a great environmental protection. The suggestion and policy recommendations made in the study would be useful to formulate the policy for future growth of ecotourism in the North East India.

9.Prospects of Ecotourism in the North East India:

Protected Area Based Ecotourism-

The North East India is blessed with natural resources. There are numbers of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries which are created to preserve the valuable wildlife resources of the region. Such wildlife resources should be preserved, protected and promoted to attract tourists from the rest of the world.

Village Based Ecotourism-

Rural tourism also can grow tremendously in the region. Traditional methods of cultivation, housing pattern, rural life style, food habit, dresses, music and dances festivals always attract tourists.

River Based Ecotourism-

The North East India is blessed with natural coffers. Swash Grounded Ecotourism- There's also tremendous eventuality of swash grounded tourism in the region. The region is having potent gutters like swash Brahmaputra and Barak. The government of Assam has formerly started Brahmaputra sand jubilee. Further there's a great compass of developing swash inclination, canoeing, Para-sailing, white water rafting, swash passage, cruising, voyaging etc. tremendous potentiality of river-based tourism in the region.

Ecotourism based on Pilgrim sites:

There are various pilgrim sites in the region such as Kamakhya Temple(Guwahati), Poa Mokka of Hajo (Guwahati),Tawang Monastery,Mainathan and Parashuram Kunda (Arunachal Pradesh), Imphal's Govinda Temple,Bhubaneswar temple, Jagganath Temple and Tripura Sundari Temple (Tripura),rumtake Monastery,Zurmang Monastery,Phodong Monastery,Pamayangtse Monastery,Tashiding Monastery, (Sikkim) etc.There is the potentiality to attract pilgrims from China, Myanmar and Thailand.

Medical Ecotourism: The north eastern region has various government and private medical institution of high standard and there is a scope for developing medical ecotourism.

Ecotourism based on Historical Monuments and Caves:

The region has been notorious for colorful literal monuments, literal places, archeological spots, castles, elders' tabernacles. also, the NE state of Meghalaya has further than 780 grottoes. In the region cave tourism can be promoted.

Ecotourism in Forests outside the protected Area-

The entire region is covered with green forests and foliage. Most of the region is highly covered by dense forests. Moreover, the region has many world-famous tea gardens and is rich in Orchids.

Golf Course Based Ecotourism-

The states like Meghalaya and Assam have various Golf courses. In Assam 10 golf courses are located within the compact area of tea estates. Most of the golf courses are having adequate infrastructure which can be further improved for golf tourism.

Ecotourism Based on Ethnicity and Culture:

The NE states are rich in Race and Culture. Different ethnic groups of the region have their own language and dialect,religious practices,customs and traditions,dresses, cuisines and performing art.Hence there is tremendous scope promotion cultural ecotourism in the region.

10.Tourist Destinations of the Region: The Eco tourist destination of the region are-

National parks:

Namdapha National Park, Arunachal Pradesh

Kaziranga National Park,Assam

Bhal Phakram National Park,Meghalaya

Nokrek National Park,Meghalaya

Mauling National Park, Arunachal Pradesh

Keibul Lamjo National Park, Manipur

Sirohi National Park, Manipur

Murlen National Park,Mizoram

Natangki National Park,Nagaland

Phawngpni National Park,Mizoram

Pobitora Wild Life Sanctuary,Assam

Sipahijola Wild Life Sanctuary,Tripura

Orang National Park,Assam

Manash National Park,Assam

Dibru Saikhowa National Park,Assam

Nameri National Park,Assam

Waterfalls:

Nohkalikai fall,Meghalaya

Nohsngithiang fall,Meghalaya

Lang Shiyang falls, Meghalaya
Keynrem fall, Meghalaya
Elephant fall, Meghalaya
panimur fall, Assam
Vantawng fall, Mizoram
Nurarang fall, Arunachal
Champawati Kunda, Assam
Siva Kunda, Assam
Akashigangafall, Assam
Bishop fall, Meghalaya
Khaipolangso fall, Assam
Belughat fall, Assam

Reserved Forest:

Kakoijana Reserved Forest-It is popular for Golden Langurs.

Pilgrim sites:

Kamakhya Temple(Guwahati)
Poa Mocca of Hajo(Guwahati)
Tawang Monastery
Mainathan and Parashuram Kunda(Arunachal Pradesh)
Imphal's Govinda Temple
Bhubaneswar temple
Jagganath Temple and Tripura Sundari Temple(Tripura)
Rumtake Monastery
Zurmang Monastery
Phodong Monastery
Pamayangtse Monastery
Tashiding Monaster,(sikkim)

Hills:

Kangchanjunga (located in Nepal, Sikkim)
Naga Hills
Patkai hills
Khasi hills, Meghalaya
Assam Himalaya hills
Garo Hills
Salla Pass
Jong Song hills Gimi Gela Suli Mountain
Kabru Mountain
Kirat Suli Mountain
Lusai Hills or Mizo Hills

River Island

Majuli, Assam-total area of 1250 square km.
Umananda Island, Assam-the smallest island in the world.

Hill Station:

Haflong, Assam
Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh
Cherrapunji, Meghalaya

Lakes:

Kaecheptri Lake, Sikkim

Lake Tsongmo, Sikkim

Gurudongmar Lake, Sikkim

Lake Shilloi, Nagaland

Umiam Lake, Meghalaya

Chandubi Lake, Assam

Dipor Beel, Assam

Son Beel, Assam

Rudrasagar Lake or Rudijala Lake, Tripura & Meghalaya

Bijoy Sagar, Tripura

Other Tourist Spot:

Living Root Bridge, Cherrapunji, Meghalaya

11. Tourist Trend to The NE Area:

(A) Table

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
SL no	Years	States	Foreign tourists (FT)	% of total FT	Domestic Tourists (DT)	% of total DT
1	2008-09	Arunachal Pradesh	321	0.83	39767	1.17
		Assam	7285	18.44	2288093	67.39
		Manipur	249	0.63	93476	2.75
		Meghalaya	12407	31.42	433495	12.77
		Mizoram	326	0.82	38598	1.15
		Nagaland	1084	2.75	10056	0.29
		Sikkim	14646	37.08	230719	6.79
		Tripura	3171	8.03	260907	7.69
		Total	39489	100	3395090	100%
2	2011-12	Arunachal Pradesh	404	0.92	82686	1.36
		Assam	10432	23.68	2569842	42.55
		Manipur	297	0.68	98870	1.63
		Meghalaya	7500	17.02	388704	6.43
		Mizoram	356	0.81	56854	0.96
		Nagaland	675	1.53	16578	0.28
		Sikkim	20456	46.44	264256	4.38
		Tripura	3920	8.92	2560456	42.40

		Total	44040	100%	6038246	100%
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Source: Department of tourism; Gov. of India,
(Column 5 and column 7 are calculated by the author)

(B)Explanation:

Sikkim has highest share of Foreign Tourist inflow(37.08 %) and Assam has highest share of Domestic Tourist inflow(67.36%) among the NE states during 2008-09. But during 2011-12, Sikkim (46.44) and Assam(42.45) has highest shares in foreign tourist inflow and domestic tourist inflow respectively.

During 2008-09, Manipur(0.635) has least share in foreign tourist inflow and Nagaland (0.295) has least share in domestic tourist inflow. The scenario remains same also during 2011-12.

The flux of domestic excursionists and foreign excursionists has been adding. During the period of 2008 and 2012 % of foreign tourist inflow to the region increased by 11.52 %. whereas the % of domestic tourist inflow increased by 77.78 %. During the same period foreign % tourist inflow increases for the states Sikkim, Tripura, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam. On the other hand, % of foreign tourist inflow decreases for the states like Manipur, Meghalaya, and Mizoram. During the same period, % of domestic tourist inflow increases for Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Nagaland. While the % of domestic tourist inflow for the states like Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland.

12.Problems of Ecotourism in the North East India:

Although there is great potentiality of ecotourism in the region, yet it is suffering some problems. Close and specific attention of government is highly important to avail the optimal benefit of tourism. The main problems of ecotourism in the region are

Insufficient Transportation and Communication facilities:

The transportation and communication facilities status of the region is very poor. Again, the natural hazards like flood, landslide harm roads almost every year. Hence, although there is incentive from government to improve the roads it becomes irritating.

Geographical Isolation:

The North-eastern region is a landlocked region and only connected by 22 kms chicken neck. Moreover, the region sometimes gets completely cut-off from the larger part of the country due to some natural calamities like landslide, flood etc.

Unavailability of Average Standard accommodation:

Attainability of average standard accommodation structure and hospices are many in figures and they demanded to be bettered. The stake holders and possessors should be trained in hospitality and save their traditional home and food habits.

Security and Insurgency Problems:

Government policy, generation stability and security are veritably important factor for any long run sustainable ecotourism in the region. Various militant groups like ULFA, NDFB(s) active in the region, which act as a threat to various foreign and domestic tourists.

Lack of Promotion:

Lack of proper advertising, marketing, networking, brand building, initiative, market research, skill development and publishing materials relating to NE region are other problems towards the development of ecotourism in the terrain. Very few travellers even in India, have little ideas about the region and consider some of the states to be alien and dangerous.

Rigid Laws and Restrictions:

Various laws and restrictions are other impediments in this context. Government of India has certain permit system such as RAP(restricted area permit), ILP (inner line permit) and both Indian and foreign nationals have to abide by them to gain entry into some states.

Inadequate Public Services & wayside amenities:

The region is facing also the problem of inadequate public services and way side amenities. The public services like PCOs,ATMs, banking and other financial services,petrol pumps,toilets,road maps for tourists, have to be provided in order to boost interest of tourists for the region.

Poverty and Illiteracy:

The per capita income and state domestic products are very poor in the region. Therefore, the level of living standard is below the average quality. Moreover, illiteracy among the people nearby tourist spots act as a constraint towards the development of tourist industry.

Communication Gap:

Due to language problems there may exists a communication gap between the tourists and the common peoples. This may also act as a problematic factor for the tourists.

Natural Hazards:

Various natural hazards like flood, landslide, earthquake, flash flood etc. are frequent in the area. They create problems for the tourists. Moreover, Most the tourist spots like Kaziranga and Pobitara etc. are affected by flood. They remain closed during the flood.

Lack Environment Friendly Tourism:

Tourists are attracted by hygienic and clean environment of the spots. But due to the lack of proper of management of tourist destinations some of the tourists reject to come to the region.

Lack of local Community Participation:

Participation and acceptance of local community is key for the success of ecotourism. Failure of ecotourism in the region creates disincentives to the local community to participate in the entire process which in turn further aggravate the problem of disincentive for the tourists.

13.Suggestion and Policy Recommendation:

In order to rejuvenate the current state of Ecotourism in the NE India some suggestions and policy recommendations are mentioned below-

Preservation and restoration of historical monuments, artwork, painting, carving etc. with every care should be-

Improved and add value to the existing destination and create new one.

Improve the management of natural and manmade resources in the region.

Set standard of requirements for the employment in tourism and hospitality sector.

All around development of infrastructure, efficient means of road communication including civil aviation.

Adequate and proper information research and communication on tourism should be made available.

Pay more attention on environment protection, more emphasis should be placed on ecofriendly sustainable tourism.

Awareness campaign should be conducted towards sustainable tourism and there should be peoples' participation.

Cost Benefit analysis of Environment should be undertaken prior to the commencement of major projects.

Agencies, corporations' groups and individuals should follow the ethical and other principles with respect to the culture and environment of the host area.

Leverage our race, ethnicity, culture and nature's enormous gift to the region.

Improve the law-and-order situation.

14.Concluding Remark:

In spite of all the problems mentioned above, ecotourism in this region has a strong and reliable advantage to boost the economy of our country. In the context of North Eastern India, it may be stated here that the tourism has tremendous potentiality to reinforce the development pace of the region sustainably. Ecotourism can bring prosperity to the region as it has broad natural base.

Ecotourism has been rightly recognized as smokeless industry that provide all the benefits to the manufacturing without any way adding to any negative impact like environmental degradation. Actually, the benefit of ecotourism is of large and so diverse that almost all countries of the world are according a very high priority to its promotion.

Government of India has to reap all potential benefits of ecotourism from the NE region as the area is regarded as the Paradise for tourists. At present, all the governments of the NE states are increasing their attention towards the tourism sector. One request to the policy makers to remove sluggishness in making public investment projects on promoting sustainable tourism in the region, as there is every possibility of faster development with it.

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